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British Campaign for the Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia

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17 September 1986

To all East Timor solidarity groups

East Timor at this year's UN General Assembly

The UN Secretary-General, Perez de Cuellar, issued a Note, A 141/602, on 12 September 1986 on East Timor. The Note has only two paragraphs:

The first paragraph says that "substantial talks" on the issue are continuing under his auspices between Indonesia and Portugal. The latest round of talks were held from 9 - 12 September, and will be continued in a few weeks time. The second paragraph states that the Secretary-General is not in a position to submit a report on the issue to the Assembly.

On 16 September, Malaysia tabled a resolution to postpone the item until the Secretary-General delivers his final report. The resolution is seconded by the Netherlands. According to an AFP report from Jakarta on 17 September, Mochtar has welcomed the postponement, saying it will help the issue "to fade away".

Interpretation

The Portuguese representative to the UN regards this postponement as "positive", and sees the fact that Malaysia, an ASEAN member, has sponsored the resolution as meaning that Indonesia is tied down to further talks with Portugal. According to the same logic, Holland's support for the resolution means tying down Portugal, a co-EEC member, to talks with Indonesia.

As we know, the talks between Portugal and Indonesia are at a very low ebb, and no progress, substantial or otherwise, has been made. Under such circumstances, the Secretary-General would indeed hardly have anything to report.

While we can do little else than accept the postponement as a fact, we need to step up pressure on our respective governments to call on the Secretary-General to include representatives of the East Timorese people in the talks, in accordance with the 1982 UN resolution 30/37. Until this happens, the talks will continue to stalemate, as at present. The only favourable thing about these recent developments is that East Timor remains on the UN agenda, and it is up to us to make sure that it does not "fade away".

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